

TRAILING 2-0 after 30 minutes, at Bedford on Monday, Wycombe Wanderers looked certain to make their exit from the FA Cup first round. But with one of the bravest recoveries seen for a long time, they pulled this game out of the fire and hung on for a second replay to be held at Loakes Park on Monday.

The toss of a coin determined the venue for the second replay with the Bedford chairman making the wrong call. There was a long discussion after the game as to when the match should be played.

So far, the two matches have followed the same pattern as nine years ago when it took the clubs four games in the first round of the FA Cup to decide the winners.

Wycombe's draw on Tuesday last looked a remote at half time. Totally unable to settle into any rhythm in the first half, the Blues were forced to defend for long periods and conceded two goals. Bedford were clearly the superior side and it looked certain they would polish off their opponents after the interval.

Bedford 2, Wycombe Wanderers 2 (a.e.t.) REPORT BY STUART EARP

But Bedford hadn't bargained for the tremendous spirit and will to win in the Wycombe side. Spurred on by a good proportion of the 4,200 crowd, they fought themselves back into the game and finished the more likely winners. It was a marvellous feat by Wanderers and one that involved all 12 players.

Pride of place, however, must go to the defence. John Delaney, Paul Birdseye, Keith Mead and Dave Bullock all gave 100 per cent. Delaney courageously battling on with a badly cut eyebrow. The midfield men also worked like trojans and the front runners lent support when needed.

It was Cup fever all over again and after last year's historic run, the Blues were not going to allow Bedford to end their chances on Tuesday.

Both sides looked the same teams as Saturday, although Bullock and Birdseye swapped

full back positions. The referee was also changed. Clive White taking over from the unavailable R. Robinson. Mr. White, a former Isthmian League official, had a fine match and applauded both teams at the end of the game.

It was a hairline decision by the referee that gave Bedford their first goal after only three minutes' play. Graham Burdett floated over a corner which goalkeeper John Maskell could only palm across the goal. Peter Phillips cracked in a shot from close range and although Bullock cleared, Mr. White ruled the ball had gone over the line. No-one argued with his decision.

The early reverse set Wycombe right back on their heels and with Bedford's defensive performance at Loakes Park on Saturday in mind, Wanderers had a formidable task on their hands. Bedford knew it, too.

That 1966 saga

LAST NIGHT'S 2-2 draw after extra time at Bedford brought back memories for thousands of Wanderers' fans. In 1966, Bedford and Wycombe took four games to decide the first round winners. Here's a summary of the matches

FIRST ROUND: Wycombe 1, Bedford 1. Scorer: Keith Samuels. Attendance: 7,488.

1st REPLAY: Bedford 3, Wycombe 3. Scorers: Paul Bates, Tony Horsman, Les Merrick. Attendance: 7,641.

2nd REPLAY (at Loakes Park): Wycombe 1, Bedford 1. Scorer: Keith Samuels. Attendance: 8,821.

3rd REPLAY (at Bedford): Bedford 3, Wycombe 2. Scorers: Tony Horsman (2). Attendance: 8,105.

They pushed Burdett and Hawkins forward at every opportunity while Phillips and Sargent were a constant threat in the middle.

Phillips forced Maskell to save at full stretch after a Mead back pass fell fractionally short and with Bedford pressing forward constantly, Wanderers could do nothing but defend. Under such pressure, the visitors were unable to construct any attacks and when they did get their first effort at goal, their luck was out. Horsman slung over a 20th minute corner which Bullock headed powerfully towards the net. Dave's effort beat goalkeeper Ray Peacock but Dave Earl managed to boot the ball off the line.

Wycombe's best hopes rested on Howard Kennedy who tried several long range efforts, which was about all they could offer at the time. Bedford continued to dominate play and by mixing their attacks with short passing bursts and huge punts down the middle, they kept Wanderers pinned in their own half.

Another goal loomed on the cards sooner or later as Wycombe just couldn't make any impression up front. It came on the half hour. Mead gave away a free kick a couple of yards outside the box. Dave Skinn tapped the ball to Bobby Folds who unleashed a powerful ground shot that skimmed past the defensive wall and wide of Maskell's dive.

That seemed to be the end for Wycombe. Bedford were in such dominant form, there looked no way Wanderers could get back into the game. But the Blues had other ideas.

It was plainly obvious, they needed an early score at the start of the second half to give themselves a chance of getting back into the game. And after Geoff Anthony had sliced one effort wide, centre half Delaney cracked home that precious goal after 49 minutes. Bedford were slow to clear a free kick and Delaney pounced to send a crisp drive into the net from 12 yards.

The goal gave Wycombe new heart but they still had to watch Bedford's dangerous whose pace often threatened to produce another goal. Sargent tested Maskell with an awkward bouncing shot on one occasion and then at the other end Kennedy volleyed a shot from 20 yards that flew straight into Wycombe's midriff. Play swung back to the Wycombe half again after the Maskell produced the save of the night from Burdett's drive that looked certain to hit the top corner of the net.

Dave Alexander replaced Anthony after 66 minutes but Bedford then mounted a severe assault on the Wycombe net in a bid to put the match beyond reach. Maskell tipped Earl's swerving shot onto the crossbar, Phillips' follow-up drive was blocked and three Bedford corners were all kept out.

Wanderers seemed unable to reply with any sustained pressure on the loose side. They attacked sporadically but couldn't retain possession long enough to trouble the defence for long periods. Then Brian Lee decided to push Delaney up front, and did in the fourth qualifying round at Croydon. Once again, it paid off.

Horsman got through in the 75th minute and Alexander forced Peacock full length with a hard cross.

It was during this spell that they equalised. It came after 79 minutes. Birdseye floated over a free kick into the six yard box and with Bedford slow to clear, Horsman pounced on the loose ball to ram home a shot past Peacock. The referee allowed the goal after a brief consultation with his linesman. Delaney returned to centre back, having caused several problems up front.

But Wanderers were still pressing forward, now looking for a winner which had seemed to drop out of the question earlier in the game. Just before full time, Peacock gathered a diving header from Horsman safely.

The game went into extra time and Bedford came back strongly in the first half. It was here that the Wycombe defence excelled themselves. Birdseye, my earlier of the match, made several timely clearances while Delaney once hooked the ball away when Howard Kennedy tried to score. Then Phillips got through but he drove across the face of goal.

Neither side was prepared to take too many risks in the second half of the first round. Dyan Evans brought a good save from Peacock with a 20 yard effort and then Alexander drove over the top when a cross might have brought better results. But Bedford had the best chance to snatch victory when Les Merrick headed over a corner in the last minute.

Immediately afterwards the referee brought this frantic cup tie to a close. The Wycombe bench rose to greet their team that had brought off a remarkable come-back. After such a performance, Wycombe certainly deserve yet another crack at the second round—and the chance of a trip to Cardiff City.

BEDFORD: R. Peacock; D. Skinn, N. Cooley, T. Gould, R. Folds; P. Hawkins, L. Marsham, E. Earl, G. Burdett, G. Sargent, P. Phillips, B. Campbell (sub.).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; R. Birdseye, J. Delaney, D. Kennedy, D. Kennedy, T. Beardon, M. Hoffield, A. Horsman, D. Evans, G. Horsman (sub. D. Kennedy).

Referee: C. White (Middlesex).
Half time: 2-0. **Goalkeepers:** Bedford (1), Phillips (3). **FA Cup (201):** Wycombe — Delaney (49), Horsman (75).

Official paying attendance: 4,267.

The second replay between Wycombe Wanderers and Bedford will be on Monday evening at Loakes Park (7.30 p.m.). Wycombe were hoping to stage the game on Saturday instead of the F.A. Trophy tie at Slough, but the F.A. ruled the replay must be played on Monday, should a further replay be necessary, it must be played by Thursday, December 4.

Should Saturday's match at Slough be drawn, it will be played on Tuesday, December 9. The scheduled Rothmans Isthmian League game at home to Southall next Tuesday is likely to be postponed.